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Tallahassee topics

NEWS AND NOTES FROM YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE.

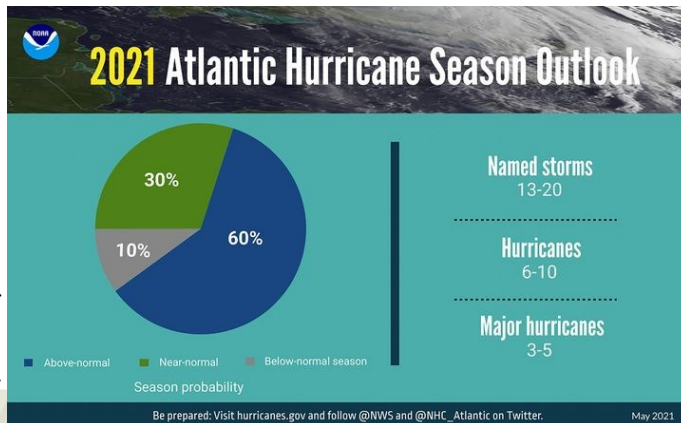
The National Weather Service (NWS) office in Tallahassee, FL provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for Southeast Alabama, Southwest & South Central Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend, and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico coastal waters. Our primary mission is the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

Spring Severe Weather Review and Hurricane Season Preview

By Israel Gonzalez

Spring Severe Weather Review: We experienced our share of severe weather this Spring, with 3 notable events between March and April that accounted for 17 confirmed tornadoes. The most tornadoic event was March 18th, when 8 confirmed tornadoes affected portions of the FL Panhandle, southeast AL, and southwest GA. The least tornadoic event on April 10th featured only half that amount but also the strongest tornado since mid-February in Damascus, when an EF-2 tornado impacted Laguna Beach, FL. April 24th was the biggest severe event in our forecast area this season, when a total of 60 convective warnings were issued, which led to 5 confirmed tornadoes, widespread wind damage, multiple hail reports, and flash flooding. The combined impacts during the prolonged period resulted in 139 storm reports, a local record for a single day! Although this Spring saw less tornadoes than 2020, the season was still active, with April 2021 reaching second place for most number of local tornadoes for the month at 9, trailing only last year's 22. This marks the second consecutive April of record-setting tornadoic activity. Prior to last year, the previous record was 7 in 1973!

Hurricane Season Preview: Beginning this year, NOAA will be using updated seasonal averages for the Atlantic basin based on climatological data collected over the past 30 years, such that the new climate “normal” period now encompasses 1991-2020. The averages are now 14 named storms and 7 hurricanes (3 major); a slight increase from the previous 12-6-3 average. These changes are from a combination of recent active seasons and better storm detection/classification skills; particularly for designating weak, open-ocean and/or subtropical systems that meet the named storm criteria: <https://www.noaa.gov/media-release/average-atlantic-hurricane-season-to-reflect-more-storms>. Speaking of names, the World Meteorological Organization implemented a supplemental list in March that permanently excludes Greek letters in the event the original name list for a given season is exhausted again, as it was in 2020: <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/supplemental-list-of-tropical-cyclone-names-raiv>. The change ensures any supplemental storms that get retired have an easily replaceable name of the same alphabetical letter. The retirement of Hurricanes Eta and Iota last year, prompted this action. This season's official outlook by NOAA calls for a 60% chance of above-normal activity, with 13-20 named storms and 6-10 hurricanes (3-6 major). The 2021 Hurricane Season is officially underway as of June 1st and ends on November 30th. Please have a Preparedness Plan in place if you don't already have one.



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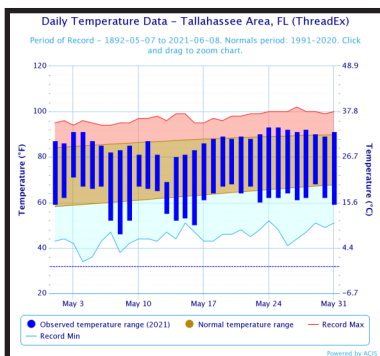
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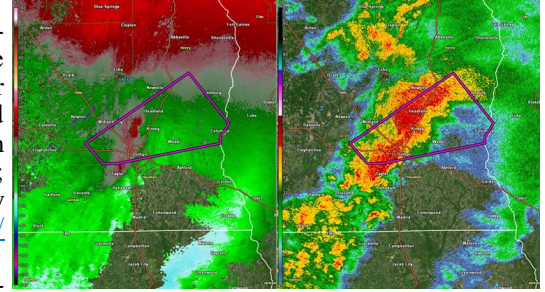


The lowest temperature was 32° on March 8th and 9th. The two days with freezing temperatures were normal for the month of March. Spring is climatologically a dry season and this year was much drier than normal with only 6.80" of rain recorded at the Tallahassee Airport. This was nearly five and a half inches below normal! Both March and May saw less than 2" of rain. The only month that received above normal rainfall was April with 3.51". The greatest amount in a 24-hour period was 1.48" from April 17th-18th.

Spring Highlights & Climate Summary

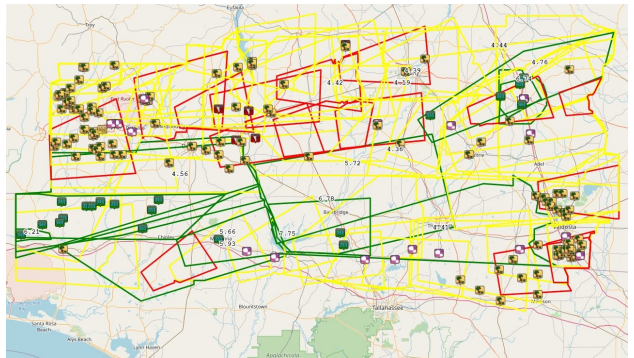
By Israel Gonzalez & Tim Barry

March: The first month of spring was highlighted by well-below normal rainfall, and two severe weather events on the 18th and 31st. The earlier event was the most significant, with 8 confirmed tornadoes, of which 5 were surveyed: 3 EF-1s in Dothan, AL and Terrell & Lee Counties in GA; 2 EF-0s in NW FL Beaches Int'l Airport (Bay County) and Houston/Henry County, AL: <https://mesonet.agron.iastate.edu/wx/afos/p.php?pi=PNSTAE&e=202103221537>. The radar-



confirmed (e.g., *upper right figure*) tornadoes not surveyed briefly touched down over heavily wooded, but unpopulated areas; some of which were inaccessible. Straight-line wind damage was also reported in Terrell County, GA that day, and Panama City, FL measured a 74-mph (hurricane-force) wind gust! March concluded with a severe squall line that pushed through our area and brought multiple damaging wind reports, including a at measured 51-mph gust at Dothan, AL.

April: Unseasonably cold air and gusty winds filtered into our area behind the aforementioned squall line on April Fool's Day. However, this weather was no joke as many locations along/near the coast reported wind gusts in excess of 30 mph (47 at Magnolia Beach in Bay County, FL). Freeze Warnings were then issued for counties north of the Tri-State area, with Frost Advisories everywhere else except the immediate Panhandle coast on the 2nd. Another round of severe storms affected us on the 10th, which produced 4 confirmed tornadoes:

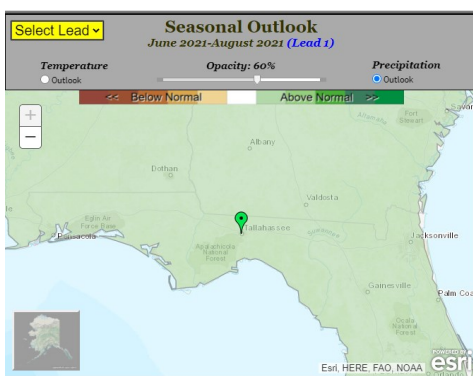
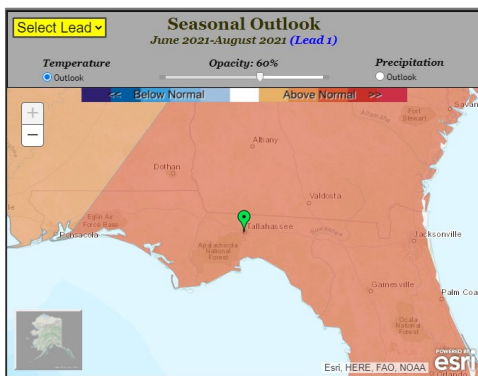


<https://forecast.weather.gov/product.php?site=NWS&issuedby=TAE&product=PNS&format=CI&version=14&glossary=0>. The strongest was an EF-2 (125-mph max winds) at Laguna Beach, FL in Bay County that began as waterspout before coming ashore. Dry, but very warm conditions prevailed for the next few days, with Tallahassee and Albany setting new daily max temperature records of 92° and 91° on the 13th and 14th, respectively. Previous records for both cities on those days were coincidentally 90° set most recently in 1981. The biggest event of the month occurred all day on the 24th when prolonged severe storms produced 5 confirmed tornadoes of EF-1 intensity or less in portions of southeast AL and southwest GA: <https://nwschat.weather.gov/p.php?pid=202104252121-KTAE-NOUS42-PNSTAE>. Other impacts (mostly along and north of the FL border) included 16 hail reports (3 of which were at least 2" diameter hailstones), some flash flooding (widespread 2-4", isolated 6-8" totals), and a whopping 139 storm reports (mostly wind damage)! The latter is a record number for a single event in our forecast area! The event was also locally ranked 3rd all time for most convective warnings issued at 60 (*figure above*).

May: It was the tale of two halves with respect to active weather. The front end of May saw bouts of strong to marginally severe storms until about mid-month. Late-May felt like an early arrival of summer, as warm and breezy conditions persisted for a few days, followed by hot temperatures characterized by readings $\geq 90^\circ$ in 8 of the final 9 days (7 consecutive from the 23rd-29th, *bottom-left figure*). The newest climate normals encompassing a 30-year period from 1991-2020 went into effect on the 4th. For Tallahassee, the new average May temperature is 75.2°, and rainfall total is 3.36" - a slight decrease from the previous climate normal period (1981-2010). We were below normal for both this year. The last notable highlight was The National Hurricane Center beginning routine issuance of their Atlantic Tropical Weather Outlook on the 15th, with Subtropical Storm Ana developing near Bermuda on the 22nd - 10 days prior to the official start of the hurricane season. Ana marks the first named storm in May for the seventh consecutive season, which further justifies the aforementioned new outlook date.

Spring Climate Summary: The climate for Tallahassee during the 3-month period of March through May saw an average temperature of 67.8°, which was near normal. The maximum temperature recorded at the Tallahassee International Airport during spring was 93° on May 24th and 25th.

Summer Outlook by Tim Barry



IS THERE A TOPIC YOU'D LIKE US
TO COVER? SEND US AN E-MAIL:
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Looking ahead to summer (June through August), the Climate Prediction Center calls for an enhanced chance for experiencing above normal temperatures and above normal rainfall. The average temperature for Tallahassee during summer is 81.9° and the average rainfall is 22.50". The latter accounts for 38% of our annual rainfall. Even in this new climate normal period, June remains our wettest month of the year at 7.76". As a reminder, the Hurricane Season is underway and will approach peak climatological activity in September. Reasoning for the aforementioned above-average prediction is the possibility of La Nina conditions developing, which is characterized by warm sea-surface temperatures, weaker tropical trade winds (i.e., lower wind shear), and an enhanced west African monsoon season. The latter is a typical origin of tropical systems, though development can occur pretty much anywhere in the Atlantic basin.

Employee Spotlight - Andy Haner

Staffing Changes: More changes have occurred since the previous Newsletter, with Meteorologist-In-Charge (MIC), Tom Johnstone and General Forecaster, Jeanie McDermott taking their talents northward. Our Science and Operations Officer, Parks Camp will be Acting MIC until the vacant position is filled. Meanwhile, we recently added a new Lead Forecaster, Karleisa Rogachski to the team from NWS Sacramento and she will join us later this month. Prior to her addition, another Lead Forecaster, Andy Haner (*pictured to the right*) joined us in March and he is in this Issue's Employee Spotlight. Get to know him better in the Q&A section below:



What sparked your interest in meteorology? A childhood in Florida has made a weather nerd of many people. In true fashion, my interest goes back to childhood. The repetitive nature of summertime afternoon thunderstorms in my hometown of Sarasota, Florida, is what first really got my attention. One of my favorite pastimes on summer afternoons was looking out the window and watching the sky grow dark to the distant east. If I was lucky, this would culminate in a dramatic, lightning-filled downpour as storms finally moved off the coast around dinnertime. When I started questioning why this happened so reliably each afternoon, I found out about the role of afternoon sea breezes from the both coasts colliding over the Florida Peninsula.

Can you compare and contrast the forecast challenges between your previous and current office? The laws of physics (and therefore meteorology) remain the same wherever you go. The same applies to the NWS mission of protecting lives and property. However, those laws manifest themselves differently in different places, and vulnerability varies. This is definitely true when comparing the Florida Keys with Tallahassee's service area. The Florida Keys are incredibly vulnerable. Nearly the entire 130+ mile long island chain is in a flood zone. Some people may think that the Key West service area is just the narrow island chain. However, it is actually about as large as Tallahassee's, measuring well over 230 miles from end to end. 40 percent of the world's maritime commerce passes through the Straits of Florida, as one of only two entrances to the Gulf of Mexico and the primary route from the Panama Canal to the U.S. East Coast. The marine forecast and latest tropical cyclone forecasts reign at NWS Key West. The Keys are also the waterspout capital of the U.S. NWS Tallahassee has its own challenges, some similar and some different from Key West. The Tallahassee service area has a lot more severe weather, particularly during the late winter and early spring. The steady drumbeat of active weather throughout the year forces me to be "at the top of my game" all year long. Ultimately, the biggest similarity to Key West is the vulnerability to hurricanes. Hurricanes are hands-down the most impactful form of weather for both areas. Key West and Tallahassee service areas share the unenviable distinction of being the landfall locations for two out of four of the Category 5 hurricanes to strike the continental U.S. in the last century (Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 for the Keys... Hurricane Michael in 2018 from the FL coast all the way into Georgia).

What are your hobbies and interests outside of work? I love the outdoors, and I love being active in the outdoors. My favorite part of our Tallahassee home is the screened-in back porch. I am so excited about the number of outdoor opportunities that are available in close proximity to Tallahassee. This ranges from walking and hiking, to floating down spring-fed rivers, to the beach of course, and there's more to discover. I've also come to enjoy home improvement projects in the last few years. I have been married to my absolute best friend, Layla, for almost 10 years. We have a blended family with a total of six kids and step-kids, ranging in age from 8 to 30. We have one grandchild, and a second is on the way. Layla and I enjoy attending sports games (most commonly football, baseball, and soccer) and look forward to attending FSU sports games of all types. Ironically, we became Seattle Seahawk season ticket holders after spending seven years on the waiting list, oh, and six months after moving to Florida. We were amused. I enjoy reading books about history, psychology, and leadership, but this is the activity that usually comes up short in a busy life.



Spring Outreach Efforts

By Mark Wool

Spring is usually the busiest time of year for outreach activities in our office. In March, service hydrologist, Kelly Godsey, facilitated a table top exercise for our Florida Big Bend counties on the 4th, simulating a major riverine flood event. On the 10th, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Mark Wool, briefed the [Apalachee Local Emergency Planning Council \(ALEPC\)](#) on the spring outlook. On the 11th, Mark was interviewed by Tallahassee’s WCTV on the NWS’ [Hazard Simplification](#) and [SKYWARN Spotter](#) Training programs. He also conducted a virtual basic spotter training class that evening. On the 17th, Mark was interviewed by the Panama City News Herald about how the NWS conducts storm damage surveys to determine the strength and [EF ratings](#) for tornadoes. On the 20th, forecaster Tim Barry presented a spring fire weather outlook to Gadsden County fire chiefs. On the 23rd, Kelly delivered a virtual advanced spotter training class.

In April, Tim presented at a statewide Prescribed Fire Council meeting on the 1st. On the 14th, forecaster Wright Dobbs taught a virtual basic spotter training course. Forecaster Jeanie McDermott taught the advanced version on the 25th. On the 21st, forecaster Lance Franck briefed emergency managers (EMs) at a quarterly meeting.

May was particularly busy. On the 4th, forecaster Molly Merrifield briefed emergency managers at a Alabama Division B meeting. On the 11th, Mark gave a hurricane season outlook and briefed on what is new this hurricane season with respect to [National Hurricane Center \(NHC\)](#) products and services, to lead off the Alabama Governor’s Hurricane Exercise. Later that day, Mark and senior forecaster Jessica Fieux met with officials from the Florida Highway Patrol to discuss our decision support services. On the 12th, Mark was interviewed by DC Today’s Del Waters of the Black News Channel. Mark discussed the upcoming hurricane season. That evening, Mark participated in a Facebook Live panel discussion on the hurricane season. Mark was joined by NHC’s Dan Brown, Bay County EM Director Frankie Lumm, WJHG’s Chris Smith and WMBB’s Ross Whitley. Panelists are pictured below right. On the 14th, Mark was interviewed by News Service of Florida’s Tom Urban on the hurricane season outlook and preparedness advice. On the 18th, Kelly participated in a statewide training session for EMs on the Storm Surge threat from hurricanes. Mark discussed the flooding rain threat the next day. Both of these sessions were a part of a [week-long training session](#) that was developed after the Florida Governor’s Hurricane Conference was cancelled due to COVID-19 (below left). Mark gave hurricane season briefings to the [Big Bend Community Organizations Active in Disaster \(COAD\)](#) on the 24th; local EMs from across our 48 counties on the 25th; FSU partners on the 28th; and the [Big Bend Healthcare Coalition](#) on June 1st. Kelly delivered similar briefings to Lowndes County GA EM partners on the 26th and officials at the Tallahassee International Airport on the 27th. Finally, Mark was interviewed by WCTV’s Hannah Messier on the 26th. The topic was the sea breeze and how it impacts weather in Tallahassee.

Management-Admin Team

Vacant, MIC
Mark Wool, WCM
Parks Camp, SOO/AMIC
Doug Sherrick, ESA
Jennifer Nichols, ASA
Vacant, ITO
Kelly Godsey, Hydrologist
Ricardo Humphreys, OPL

Lead Forecasters

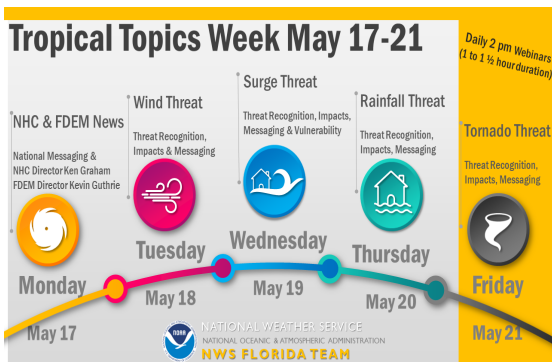
Don Van Dyke
Jessica Fieux
Blair Scholl
Andy Haner
Karleisa Rogacheski

Forecasters

Tim Barry
Lance Franck
Wright Dobbs
Eric Bunker
Israel Gonzalez
Kristian Oliver
Jasmine Montgomery
Molly Merrifield
Cameron Young, Tentative

Electronic Technicians

Aaron Basti
Marty Riemann



Hurricane Preparedness and Panel Discussion

Wednesday, May 12, 2021 – 8PM EDT

 Dan Brown National Hurricane Center	 Mark Wool National Weather Service Tallahassee	 Frankie Lumm Bay County Emergency Management	 Chris Smith WJHG-TV	 Ross Whitley WMBB-TV

Join these panel of experts on **Wednesday, May 12, 2021 at 8PM EDT** on Facebook Live to learn about hurricane preparedness. Given the recent impacts from Sally and Michael, we'll have plenty to talk about. We will also answer some of your questions so come join our panel of experts as we help you get ready for the 2021 Hurricane Season

NWS Tallahassee Facebook Live (facebook.com/NWSTallahassee/live)